

Productive-prosociality, tensions of a solidarity-based entrepreneurial subjectivity: A study with Peruvian social entrepreneurs

Prosocialidad-productiva, tensiones de una subjetividad emprendedora solidaria: Un estudio con emprendedores sociales peruanos

Ángela Vera Ruiz*, Agustín Espinosa

Departamento de Psicología, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Lima, Perú

* averar@pucep.pe

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Background

According to literature, there are social entrepreneurs whose psychosocial characteristics are very different from conventional ones. They have a high moral consciousness and great social and compassionate purpose to resolve neglected needs and inequities in their environment, seeking the common good. Social entrepreneurs design business models to generate economic income that give financial autonomy to the achievement of social objectives, generating social and economic value simultaneously. It is interesting from a discursive perspective because, conventionally, the mechanisms to achieve economic and social incomes have been considered antagonistic between them. Research about social entrepreneurs shows that they harmoniously recognize the complementarity and synergy between social and economic value, as guarantors of a sustainable social transformation. The discourse, understood as language in action, produces and justifies knowledge, social relations and subjective postures, legitimizing certain ways of behavior and visualization of the world. Critical studies on entrepreneurship discourses and their effects in the subjectivity, shows that the neoliberal system extol those values that restraint cooperative and prosocial socioeconomic behaviors. The discursive analysis of the integration of the economic and social discourses in an unequal country like Peru, can provide comprehensive elements to promote solidarity discourses and practices from economic actors, by recognizing the relativism and the socially constructed condition of economic inequities in the society.

Aims

This study seeks to understand how the coexistence of discourses on the creation of social value and economic value are integrated into entrepreneurial subjectivity.

Method & Procedures

A qualitative methodology with a discursive approach design was proposed. Twenty-six social entrepreneurs in Peru were interviewed, 13 women and 13 men, between 27 and 65 years old. All ethical considerations have been taken in respect to the care of the participants. The interviews addressed three main areas: (1) Social entrepreneurial activities/fields, (2) Strategies and reasons for integrating social and economic value and, (3) Subjective reflections about experiences that have positioned them as social entrepreneurs. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed through the identification of interpretative repertoires. A return of results was made to participants, which allowed for a validation of the analysis carried out.

Results & discussion

Based on the analysis of results, it is proposed the concept of productive-prosociality, which is defined as behaviors oriented to cooperate and generate collective social benefits, whose impact and sustainability are based on economic self-supply. This is a psychosocial behavioral dimension that is based on three main repertoires: The first repertoire is called "I recognize the discomfort of others and act in a practical way to reduce it". Here is identified the participants' ability to connect emotionally with other people and take responsibility for them. An empathic productive-prosocial action offers concrete, realistic and practical results to the urgent, reasonable and unattended needs of people, for which nobody else

assumes responsibility. The participants' discourse expresses how to feel the discomfort in others, forces them to propose strategies in order to solve it. This is an entrepreneurial practical capacity to solve problems, that is not based on competition but on cooperation and service. The second repertoire "I do not do charity or philanthropy because I believe in people's capacities", focus on empowering people so that they can solve their circumstances in a sustainable way. The idea is to recognize that, in a process of claiming rights, multiple agents of social change must be involved. The key is giving people information and opportunities to develop their capacities to transform social asymmetries. This is a cooperative discourse which seeks economic benefit for social purposes of the project. The third repertoire "I propose necessary goods and services, involving all parties to generate shared value" addresses the concrete processes of value creation. Entrepreneurial project develops goods or services in order to seek permanent social solutions, outside a conventional commercial logic because it involves all parties (beneficiaries, suppliers, customers, neighbors, etc.) from a principle of solidarity that integrates to the management the empathic and participatory factors, mentioned in the first two repertoires.

Conclusion

The supposed opposition between social and economic value disappears in a productive-prosocial logic, which generates an integral value, capable of claiming social rights in a convulsed present governed by the traditional hegemonic logics of the global capitalist and neoliberal system. The present study shows an ethical, compassionate and conscious entrepreneurial positioning of its social duty to operate from collaboration and sustainability. The presence of these persons in market, still a minority but on the rise, leads to ask why they are the exception and not the rule to what should be expected from the entrepreneurial behavior. From the discursive approach of this study, it is possible to conclude that giving new meanings to the subjectivity of the entrepreneurial role is something possible. In Peru where are great social injustices, informality, high positive evaluation of the entrepreneurial activity and an inefficient State answer to the most vulnerable population. Studying productive-prosociality is relevant, because it offers a tool for analyzing an alternative repositioning in entrepreneurial subjectivities that challenge conventional markets.

Keywords: entrepreneurship, prosocial behavior, productivity, sustainability

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